

Duxbury sets its course for new center



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / TOM LANDERS

Duxbury Bay Maritime Center board members (from left) Patricia Loring, Don Beers, and Charles Fargo meet at its Snug Harbor site.

A major gift and hiring of a top-level director boost sailing and marine ecology program

By Jeff McLaughlin
GLOBE STAFF

DUXBURY — In salty Duxbury, the spirits of townspeople are soaring these days, because the winds are blowing fair already for the newly commissioned Duxbury Bay Maritime Center, a nonprofit sailing and marine ecology program due to be launched on the Snug Harbor waterfront sometime this spring.

Just before Christmas, the center's all-volunteer fund-raising committee announced a major donation from the Ellison Foundation in memory of the late William P. Ellison, a longtime Duxbury resident with a deep love of the water and of Duxbury youngsters, who are to be the principal beneficiaries of the center's programs.

The amount of the Ellison gift was not disclosed but is believed to be at least \$750,000. The fund-raising campaign, kicked off a year

ago, now has raised \$1.8 million, according to the center's board of directors.

In addition to good news on the financial front, the center got a major boost a few weeks ago when Mike Horn, longtime Harvard College Sailing Team coach, agreed to become the center's first executive director. He is already visiting Duxbury regularly from his Connecticut base and will move in and take over full-time within a few weeks. Horn brings instant credibility at the national level for the Duxbury school's eventual entry into the world of competitive amateur sailing.

"Our fund-raising goal is \$3 million, and we're well on our way," said board member Frederic M. Clifford, long active in Duxbury nonprofit organizations. "When the idea came together that this was a way to ensure there would always be good public access to the waterfront, and that we'd be doing it with a

SAILING, Page 5

Sailing center sets course with major gift, new leader

■ SAILING

Continued from Page 1

program built around a real appreciation of the beauty of Duxbury Bay. Well, it was just like a light suddenly went on in town.

"We've received very substantial donations, but also many smaller ones," Clifford said. "It seems everyone agrees this is an idea whose time had come."

The first major expenditure will be for a 2.25-acre parcel of prime waterfront land in Snug Harbor that will become the William P. Ellison Campus of the center. A purchase-and-sale agreement on the property, which includes an office building, marine-use buildings, and sheds, was signed last April with the current owner, Jack Davis, and the sale should be closed within a few weeks, according to board member Charles H. Fargo, a semi-retired banker with expertise in real estate. The sale price has not been made public.

Snug Harbor Boat Works, a boatbuilding enterprise that leases space on the site, will continue to do so and will be a partner in some of the center's educational components, according to Patricia Loring, chairwoman of the town's open space committee and a board member for the new center. Loring is running the center's office at Snug Harbor, handling its administrative affairs, and helping with site design and environmental permitting - all as a volunteer.

"A project like this brings people together," Loring said. "The board members have complementary skills and talents, and the one thing in common seems to be the determination we all have to keep some part of the waterfront open and devoted to this kind of communitywide use."

'One generation that loves this place and has learned a little bit about taking care of it is going to pass on that love and that knowledge to the next generation' at the sailing center.

DON BEERS

Duxbury harbor master

Meanwhile, the center has ordered 60 small sailboats - Optimists, 1420s, and Lasers, requiring different skill levels - and several large floats for docking them are under construction. The floats will be sited just north of the Snug Harbor campus, in the basin on the north side of Long Point.

"The public acceptance of the project has been fantastic," said Fargo. "We had a preregistration session at a church fair last fall to gauge interest, and we expected perhaps 100 youngsters to sign up. We got 350. Then we had another one in the evening at the high school, and got another 100 or more. Applications come into the office every day."

One morning last week, Duxbury resident Sarah Gallagher stopped by the center's campaign office next to the Duxbury harbor master's office, dropping off a resume because she hopes to work at least part time there when operations quicken pace in the spring, and also to pick up more information about the sailing instruction programs.

"I've got three kids, aged 13, 11, and almost 8, so to me this is just a fabulous idea," said Gallagher. "My eldest took the sailing class that the town Recreation Department offered last summer, and he loved it. But that was on a pond, not salt water, and the town program just has three boats. To go from three to 60 boats is amazing, and the center's board has made a big point of saying they would keep tuition costs down to make it affordable for everybody, which is very important. Every parent I know is excited."

Of course, many Duxbury youngsters have learned to sail over the years, but a principal avenue has been the instructional programs of the private Duxbury Yacht Club, which has a limited membership and is out of reach for many townspeople. While the yacht club's racing events are generally open to all, only members can take part in the instructional programs.

Some of the originators of the campaign for the new center are yacht club members, Fargo said.

"The idea for the center probably can be said to have germinated from a study group that was exploring the possibility of the Duxbury Yacht Club's increasing access to the waterfront," Fargo said.

"Out of that group came the notion that a new private nonprofit enterprise, blending together a whole large group of people with diverse interests but united by their love of the water, well, that might be just the right way to go. It followed logically on the model of the Ellison Center for the Arts here in Duxbury, in that it's really owned by everybody in town. And the idea for the center has simply taken off, and we're very pleased."

Duxbury harbor master Don Beers is excited at the prospects of the center, too, in large measure, he said, because its emphasis on education dovetails with the way he has operated his office for the past 20 years. That convergence is the reason he accepted honorary board membership.

"Duxbury is unique because of this waterfront and the barrier beach," Beers said. "Where urbanization has done a real number on coasts everywhere, here the townspeople have protected the resources, and kept the tradition and history unchanged for the most part.

"That's a blessing, on the one hand, because we're the keepers of this resource," said Beers. "But the flip side is we're the vacationland of the whole South Shore and beyond, which is fine, but presents some real challenges. So education about proper use, proper management, about access issues, about resource issues — that's all really vital if we're going to hold on to this very precious place. And that's going to be just as much a part of the center as sailing itself.

"So I think the center is going to be fantastic," said Beers. "One generation that loves this place and has learned a little bit about taking care of it is going to pass on that love and that knowledge to the next generation.

"Duxbury people may disagree about a lot of things, but on the issue of Duxbury Bay, everybody is on the same wave length," he said.